Approved For Release 2000/08/23: CIA-RDP62S00346A000100210003-1 COMMENTS ON THE SOVIET TIRE INDUSTRY

The USER tire industry is characterized by low efficiency as compared with the US and most Western European countries. The technology employed in the USER is not as advanced and the finished products are inferior in quality. Production capacity has been expanded greatly since World War II and an ambitious program for further expansion was laid out for the period 1956-1960 in the now abandoned Sixth Five-Year Plan.

Soviet motor vehicle tire production during the period 1946 to 1957 is shown in the attached table. USSR production of almost 13 million tires in 1957 compares with US production of about 107 million tires in the same year. Most of the tires produced in the USSR are truck tires; probably no more than 15 percent are for passenger car use.

The Soviet Sixth Five-Year Plan called for doubling 1955 production by 1960 or an annual increase of about 15 percent. The labor force, however, was to increase only 40 percent. Sixty percent of the increased production was to come from existing tire plants and forty percent from new plants. At the beginning of 1956 the USSR had 8 tire plants, and at least 4 additional plants were to be built by 1960. Tire production actually increased only 10 percent during each of the first two years of the plan period (1956-1957).

The Soviets have contracted with the UK for a complete tire plant, including buildings and equipment, to be installed at Dnepropetrovsk. This plant is to have an annual capacity of 2 million tires. The equipment ordered for this plant embodies the latest advances in technology, some of which are not yet in general use in this country. The British are reportedly also to furnish the technicians required to get the plant into

Approved For Release 2000/08/23: CIA-RDP62S00346A000100210003-1 production. In addition to this plant, there have been reports of attempts by the Soviets to buy equipment from the British for installation at other sites, but we have no information that such equipment has actually been purchased.

The quality of Soviet tires is inferior by US standards. A Soviet technical journal recently estimated that 50 percent of the Soviet tires withdrawn from service were removed because of failures resulted from poor construction, and the remainder because of tread wear. A Soviet truck tire gives an average of 20,000 miles of service, less than half that of the average US truck tire. The Soviets are aware of the importance of improving the quality of their tires. A recent Soviet press statement estimated that an improvement of only 10 percent in durability would save 50 million rubles (12.5 million dollars at the official rate) for every million tires produced.

There are two principal causes for the inferior quality of Soviet tires, namely, poor technology and poor quality of raw materials. According to qualified sources, the existing Soviet tire plants are antiquated by US standards. The most modern factory, located in Moscow, uses equipment built in the US some 20 years ago. Originally installed in the Ford plant at River Rouge, this equipment was shipped to the USSR during World War II under the lend-lease program. The level of technology embodied in this plant may be judged by the Soviet estimate that the manhours of labor required per tire in the new British plant will be 60 percent less than in the Moscow plant. The reduction may be as much as 80 percent as compared with the native built Soviet tire plants, which are even less efficient.

According to Soviet sources, 54 percent of all employees in Soviet tire factories in 1956 were engaged in hand labor.

The low quality of Soviet raw materials also affects tire quality.

The most serious raw material problem is caused by the fact that the USER has not learned to make special grades of carbon black essential for long wear. The Soviets are just beginning to make butyl rubber, which is essential for satisfactory tubeless tires and for superior inner tubes. Finally, only about one-third of Soviet tires are presently made with rayon or nylon cord. The balance contain cotton cord, which US manufacturers consider inadequate for heavy-duty tires.

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